Paper Thin Plans

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Paper Thin Plans

by hartfeathers

Summary

He can't keep pretending that this is okay, that how they are living now is okay for him, they can't go on walking on eggshells in this plateau existence somewhere between friends and strangers. Something needs to change and he knows he has to be the one to change it.

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Inspired by a tweet from @CrackHannigram, link in notes.

Prompt - "Not measured by conventional means."

Notes

Hannibal Bingo Fill: Prompt - "Not measured by conventional means."

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Inspired by this tweet - https://twitter.com/CrackHannigram/status/1623587189539106816?t=nCns_xnu0qtS5KPvz6EEbg&s=19

The above tweet talks about Will saying this quote to Hannibal after visiting him in prison: "You're the love of my life. I assumed I would get over you eventually, but seeing you yesterday? I couldn't go home to someone else and pretend to love her with everything I have." - Love and Other Words by Christina Lauren

The title and a couple of lines are from Death By A Thousand Cuts by Taylor Swift.
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"I can't pretend I'm ok when I'm not."

This is the first time Will has openly acknowledged his mental state since they arrived here, in the slowly crawling months of cohabitation this is the first time he has decided to confront the glaringly obvious fact that they can't go on willfully ignoring. While he has managed to work through the water logged mess of disorientation and confusion that lingered in the weeks after their fall into the ocean he is still not okay. He feels himself almost constantly fighting to find some common ground between the split self that resides inside his head, on top of that struggle is Hannibal and his feelings for him. He can't keep pretending that this is okay, that how they are living now is okay for him, they can't go on walking on eggshells in this plateau existence somewhere between friends and strangers. Something needs to change and he knows he has to be the one to change it.

"You don't have to pretend, not with me. You once asked me not to lie to you and since that day I have not, I may have concealed things but I never lied to you and I don't want you to lie to me either, Will."

"Even if my words may hurt you?"

Hannibal doesn't hesitate, "Yes."

Will considers him for a moment but he instantly knows the honesty in that one word, Hannibal has always embraced whatever Will gave him even if it meant pain. He nods and drains the whiskey from his glass then generously refills it, the alcohol he has already consumed gives him the little rush of bravery he needs to finally be able to have this conversation.

"I tried so hard for so long to be the person I thought I should be. To deny all those dark and ugly parts of myself. I kept them suppressed and hidden because the allure of them was so strong that if I gave in I knew I would be changed forever." Will pauses, the weight of the words making the air thick, "Then I met you. You changed everything, Hannibal. At first you were the friend I never knew I needed, and I did need you. I trusted you and you broke me in ways I have never been able to fix, and I never will."

Hannibal averts his gaze, he can't find it within himself to regret what he did because despite all the pain and suffering it has led them here and it helped Will shed his chrysalis. However he aches for how his actions have scarred Will, he sometimes longs for the way Will used to look at him with unguarded affection and trust. "I understand, Will."

Will just nods, he doesn't expect apologies or placations because they would be false and just make him angry. He wants Hannibal to be honest and he knows the older man feels no remorse for what he did, and Will doesn't expect him to. He just needs to tell Hannibal everything, all the ugly and shattered truths that lay heavy in his soul. He needs to release them because he can't bear the weight anymore, to move forward he needs to begin to let go.

"But I won't deny that you helped me. You helped me accept myself completely, to look at the parts of myself I tried to bury and embrace them. I've never known myself as well as I

know myself when I'm with you." He waits for a moment to let Hannibal process those words and the importance of them. He feels a pang in his chest to see the wonder and wet sheen in his eyes. "I said those words to Chiyoh the first day we met. She called us Nakama and it's the only word that came close to describing us."

Hannibal sucks in a small sharp breath upon hearing this, he has long wondered about the conversations Chiyoh and Will had, she would never tell him. Without ever talking to him she saw Will, heard his story and knew he was someone important to Hannibal. She knew he was someone she would have to protect for Hannibal and also protect him from - after all she pushed Will off a train and shot him in the shoulder. She wounded him but never fatally because she knew to do so would be to hurt Hannibal irreparably.

Will clears his throat and continues, "Acquaintance, friend, enemy, mentor, accomplice. How many titles have we had for each other?" he sighs, "How many other people have tried to label us? *Murder Husbands*."

"Freddie does have a way with words. I quite liked that one."

Will shakes his head almost fondly, "I knew you would. Alana and Jack on the other hand..." he trails off and takes another gulp of whiskey.

"Neither Alana nor Jack could ever understand who we are individually, they could never hope to understand what we are to each other, nevermind label us."

"Didn't stop them from trying, or from trying to enforce labels that suited them. But none of them ever seemed to stick."

Hannibal's lips quirk, "Like an ill-fitting suit."

Will can't help the small snort of laughter at words of his own being quoted back to him.

Hannibal looks at him, Will can't escape the alluring amber depths of his eyes and the soft cadence of his voice as he speaks, "What we experience and how we feel about each other are things that are not measured by conventional means."

Will scoffs lightly as he looks into his glass, swirling the golden whiskey gently, "Nothing about us is conventional."

"There's nothing wrong with shirking convention, Will, its constraints can be suffocating."

Will pinches the bridge of nose and rubs his eyes a little, "Our relationship can be suffocating, Hannibal."

Hannibal feels the sharp sting of Will's words like a blade cutting into his skin, it burns and aches but he's right. Their relationship is intense and passionate, they intertwine so tightly and the ties that bind them can bite viciously but they will never release, and Hannibal would kill anyone who tried to separate them again. Despite knowing the truth of Will's words he can't help but counter with sharp words of his own, "It is your plans that set the course for much of our relationship, Will."

Will laughs, wistful and a little bitter, "The paper thin plans of a broken man."

Hannibal smiles as he remembers the cunning look on Will's face when he whispered that small 'please', "The plan for my escape was the thinnest of all."

Will just tilts his head in agreement, there is no hiding how flimsy that plan had been, especially from Hannibal. The older man had seen right through him and could see the layers of deception were not entirely crafted for Hannibal's sake alone.

"But you're not broken, Will."

Will just laughs, a fractured and almost forced sound. "I am broken, Hannibal. My sense of self has been distorted and shattered several times over, there's no point in denying it. I've accepted that there's pieces of myself I'll never get back, now I just want to put myself together in a way I can live with." he takes several long sips of his whiskey, his eyes sting with tears he refuses to shed because he's cried enough and there's no use crying about something he's already come to terms with. He closes his eyes and takes a deep breath, feeling a little more settled he opens his eyes to be greeted with Hannibal intense gaze, so dark his eyes almost seem red.

"So why release me, Will?" Hannibal has been desperate to ask this simple question ever since that day. Why? Why would Will throw away the new life he made after his determined declarations to reclaim it? Why return to Hannibal after being hurt and shattered by him? He needs to know, the unspoken uncertainty between them makes his chest feel tight.

"I spoke to Bedelia, that's why. She told me something that I really already knew." Will knows now that part of himself always knew what Hannibal felt for him but willfully denied it because he knew what facing it would mean. Hannibal’s love is dark, fierce, possessive and wonderfully terrible and he wasn't ready to accept it, so he ignored and rejected it. But that day in Bedelia's house, hearing confirmation from her that what he perceived was true, it wasn't just a warped interpretation of the truth, it felt like everything he ever wanted - Hannibal is in love with him. At that point he had learned not to trust his own perception of Hannibal and his feelings, so hearing those words from Bedelia, who understands Hannibal almost as much as he does, meant more than Will could ever say. And once again his life changed forever.

Hannibal tenses as he waits, he didn't know Will had been to see Bedelia and he can't help but wonder what kind of conversations they had. Part of him yearns to see them interact, to see how they react to each other and what dynamic they have. But right now he needs to know what she said to him.

Will looks directly at Hannibal, "She confirmed that you are in love with me."

Hannibal freezes, the breath stolen from his lungs as those words hang heavily in the air. Will's ocean eyes pierce him to the core and he makes no move to deny it, he can't and won't. However he feels a little cheated that Bedelia has stolen his confession before he even had the chance to utter it. He wanted to tell Will those words when they were both ready but Bedelia took that from him, while he appreciates the outcome he will need to seek reparation for having that moment denied to him.

"I won't ask you to say anything but I want you to know that finally understanding your feelings helped me accept my own." Will throws back the last of his whiskey and sighs, he doesn't look at Hannibal as he speaks words that feel almost brittle, “You’re the love of my life. I assumed I would get over you eventually, but seeing you again after three years of separation? I couldn’t go home to someone else and pretend to love her with everything I have.”

Hannibal feels as if the entire universe has simply stopped moving, the room is silent and still in the aftermath of Will's words. He feels sudden hot tears spill over and fall down his cheeks as emotions swell uncontrollably within him. He feels happiness far beyond anything he has ever experienced, a sense of euphoria and relief that his feelings are reciprocated. He hoped but didn't let himself expect anything, he would have lived the rest of life happily beside Will without those words, he needs nothing more than Will with him. This is everything he dreamt of on those cold lonely nights during their multiple separations, it's the future he envisioned like a rose-tinted fairytale.

He swallows thickly around the lump in his throat and moves forward in his chair feeling the desperate need to touch Will, to physically embrace him and hold onto this moment for as long as he can. But his movement seems to bring Will out of whatever trance he has been in these past few moments and the other man stands quickly, taking a short step back. Will then casts him a fleeting glance and leaves the room, Hannibal hears the faint sound of footsteps on the stairs and the dull click of Will's bedroom door.

Hannibal feels his heart twist in his chest at the retreat, longing swells within him and he feels part of himself clawing desperately for affection and reassurance. But he understands why Will left, he has split himself open tonight, let himself be raw and vulnerable, and now he needs time alone. Will needs space and time, which Hannibal is willing to give him. Knowing that Will loves him and a life together isn't just a dream anymore, he will wait as long as it takes.

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